

BIG BUCKS COURTS, BANKS, and the IRS by Sherman H. Skolnick

In many larger cities, and some smaller ones also, there is a section of the local court called Chancery Court or Chancery Division. It is NOT a place for minor claims such as bus accidents and such. To be heard in Chancery Division are property foreclosure cases, injunction cases, bank trust litigation, class actions for misrepresentation of products, bank problems, and such.

Chicago has such a court, called Chancery Division of Cook County Circuit Court. Is there such a Court where YOU are? Start asking questions and be sure to let us know.

The Chancery Division in the Windy City has a long, crooked past, dotted with scandals not always adequately publicized by what we call the "Liars and Whores of the Press" nor divulged by the "Cowards of the Law". In the 1980s, second in command of Chancery Division was Judge Reginald Holzer. His wife was big in real estate and insurance. They got along well with certain hoodlum banks. BUT: Holzer lived above his judicial salary. He was forever needing to raise money. Those who wanted to work a malign, if not corrupt, influence on his judicial rulings understood all this. So they gave him alleged "loans" from banks they were connected with. AND: banks always have a lot of litigation business in Chancery Court. A great secret of U.S. judicial history is that a sizeable number of the really important judges have been directors of small, closely held banks, and stockholders of the same. Often, it is the bank across the street from the Courthouse, and often, with lawyer offices in the bank building or right nearby.

It is a fairy tale to say judges are bribed with a bag of money at midnight in an alley. The bribery is most often through banks in which judges, lawyers, and sizeable corporations have a financial interest. As head of a court reform group, I have adequately demonstrated this over a period of four decades.

During a group of scandals touched off by our work, 1983 to 1993, called "Operation Greylord", Judge Holzer became aware the federal police were centering on the "loans" he was getting from certain banker-lawyers, with the apparent understanding that Holzer did not have to pay back. As we were the only ones to publicly mention, Holzer was prepared to save himself by snitching on eight OTHER judges in Chancery Division. Holzer was reportedly going to finger the head judge of Chancery, Judge John Hechinger.

One day I was a journalist/spectator in the courtroom of Judge Hechinger. I was observing what I deemed to be another crooked property case. During a recess, Judge Hechinger stood up from the bench, and addressed me. "You know, Mr. Skolnick, you just don't know what you are talking about, saying I was formerly with the FBI. In fact, I was with the CIA." I still remember exclaiming "WOW!" To me, it helped explain why Judge Hechinger was not to be publicly fingered for bribery by second in command, Judge Holzer. "National security" is as good an excuse to save CIA darlings from the fire. Hechinger was also---now get this---a top official of the Cemetery Workers Union. Like mafioso jointly with espionage agencies, did Hechinger and Company bury a few "enemies" in unmarked locations?

Judge Hechinger was allowed to quietly resign or retire. Judge Holzer, fearing for his life, did not finger the other judges for bribery, and, lips sealed, went off to prison, a convicted bribe-taker. A few mafioso-banker-lawyers were disbarred, sort of to reassure the know-nothing public that now all is well again in dear old, crooked old Chicago.

I am no longer surprised by what goes on in Chancery Division.. The powers-that-be are forever inserting a known crook there, promoting him to the Big Bucks Court from some other court section. One such is Judge Lester D. Foreman. In past years, Judge Foreman had been in control of Assignment Court, where cases ready for trial are kept on call to be sent to trial judges in the Law Division. Judge Foreman at the time was second in command to the head of Law Division, namely, Judge Pasquale J. Sorrentino, one of the Old West Side mob's apparent favorites. From time to time, I ended up in Judge Sorrentino's office, right behind Judge Foreman's huge courtroom. I often accompanied litigants who wanted to point out something improper if not crooked in Law Division. A big bear of a man, Judge Sorrentino with a big smile would stretch out his faker's handshake to seem apparently believing that would set me at ease. Maybe since I rolled into his office in a wheelchair, maybe he figured that I am stupid after all, perhaps paralyzed in both body and mind. I was always quick to make a mental note of the plaques on his wall linking him to the Vatican.

The federal secret political police had damaging evidence that Sorrentino arranged through Foreman to reportedly steer certain cases, not by random selection, on to hand-picked judges for alleged "trial", actually for the big fix. All for his lawyer-pals from the Old West Side. Actually, the traditional Italian and Sicilian mafia jointly with other ethnic gangsters, has long since moved their center of operations to west suburban Oak Brook. [The late Frank Sinatra and his mafia friends were major stockholders of Oak Brook Development Company, that made the area an underworld goldmine of crooked public officials and fancy stores.] So head Judge Sorrentino was allowed to quietly resign and not go to prison and given a pass was Judge Lester D. Foreman (312)603-6052 who was promoted to Big Bucks Court, Chancery Division.

Those in the know whisper his name, Chancery Judge Albert "Money" Green (312)603-6034. Like a riverboat gambler, he has been known to wear a polka dot vest on his bench. His specialty? Those several hundred million dollar class actions against sizeable corporations who supposedly did something wrong in selling, promoting their products or their services. The lawyers who bring such actions, called plaintiffs' class action attorneys, if they win, stand to have their usual fees per hour multiplied several times over, as a reward for bringing a class action, supposedly on behalf of all persons victimized. Sometimes their fees are quite a blockbuster per centage of the total award, leaving little if anything for the money to trickle down to the class action suckers who may not have seen the small-print ads in out-of-the-way places in the newspapers.

Cases are supposed to be assigned to judges by random selection. Oh yeah? That is a key factor in our investigations of judicial corruption. How is it, we try to find out, that certain judges somehow end up with certain types of cases, to facilitate the "Big Fix"?

For example, we figured it was no coincidence that Judge "Money" Green was assigned the billion dollar case against the Midwest Stock Exchange. Members of the Exchange claimed they were cheated by "phantom agreements" apparently worked into the Exchange's bookkeeping system when they changed from paper records, about 1977, to computer generated records. Reportedly concealed have been hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars of transactions. The State and Federal tax collectors, the heads of which are too often corrupt, apparently got a piece of the action and thus never made inquiry of the reputed massive tax evasion. The case, 91 CH 09037, brought into the Court record such a stink, that the name was changed to Chicago Stock Exchange. The monopoly press has not reported the really important details of the litigation. Like the head of a gambling casino, Judge "Money" Green has apparently found some way to siphon off his cut or benefit of this river of loot.

About 1999, becoming the new head of Chancery Division was Judge Francis Barth {312}603-4181. Notice how he became top dog there. In 1998, running on the GOP ticket for Illinois Governor was George H. Ryan, for many years having been Illinois Secretary of State. As head of the State's offices for drivers license applications, weighing of trucks for possible overweight violations, and car and other drivers license applications---well, George H. Ryan was in a position to be the apparent recipient of big money. It became more public as a result of a tragedy. Several passengers in a vehicle were killed by another vehicle driven by a fellow who apparently was not eligible for a drivers license and obtained one reportedly by bribing one of Ryan's people. So the federal secret political police began a belated investigation of drivers license pay-offs. A secret IRS team determined that upwards of one million dollars in such bribes were collected, just in recent times alone. Ryan had been Illinois Secretary of State for some eight years. Ryan's drivers license bureau managers and examiners contended they did not keep the bribes but forwarded them to Ryan for his election campaigns. Ryan claimed he did not know some of his own people, and did not remember getting the money.

Here is how upwards of one million dollars of reputed bribe money was used in 1998. Ryan ran for Governor on the GOP ticket. Polls showed there would be only about 4 per cent difference between the vote for Ryan and his Democrat Party challenger, Glenn Poshard, up to that time a downstate Congressman. In 1998, the Libertarian Party was set to put forward a major effort for their third party candidate for Governor. They somehow put together a big advertising budget and were expected to pull some 8 per cent of the vote for Governor. Unlike previous elections where they pulled a small per centage of the vote, the third party candidate in 1998 could have made the difference in the Governor's election outcome.

Ryan's people were reportedly used to challenge the candidate petitions for Governor for third party. The Illinois State Board of Elections general counsel and hearing examiner said the third party had enough petitions. Without apparent specifications, the Board members, however, knocked the Libertarian Party off the ballot. If the Libertarians had remained on the ballot and pulled the expected 8 per cent of the vote for Governor, George H. Ryan could NOT have been elected.

Ryan reportedly used the one million dollars of drivers license bribery money as follows:

1. Reportedly bribed some members of the Illinois State Board of Elections.
2. Some top officials of the state tax collectors, the Illinois Department of Revenue, and top officials of the IRS, Chicago Region, found out about the bribery melon and blackmailed their way into a cut of the action. The U.S. Treasury Inspector General apparently knows about all this and takes no remedial action.
3. The Elections Board matter was appealed to Judge Francis Barth, just before the 1998 election, at the time Barth holding the position of "County Judge", rather than "Circuit Judge", in charge of hearing election cases. Barth was reportedly bribed by Ryan to okay the Elections Board knocking the Libertarians off the ballot. So Ryan was supposedly "elected" Governor.

The system being corrupt, crooked public officials are most often rewarded instead of being punished. So, shortly thereafter Judge Francis Barth became head of Big Bucks Court, the Chancery Division. A fellow judge with Barth, Foreman, "Money" Green and others in the unholy Chancery Court with the "big fix" is Judge Thomas P. Durkin (312)603-4890. And, like the others, we never accused Judge Durkin of being honest.

Who are the chief "sacred cows" with big business in Chancery Division? Why, the banks who have millions and millions of dollars of litigation pending there. The head "sacred cow" is La Salle National Bank. Savvy folks know La Salle Bank has so much "clout" and "muscle", they can, if they choose, ignore with impunity court legal papers, such as summonses and subpoenas, thumb their nose at court orders requiring them to divulge records, and even, reportedly on occasion make records appear and disappear, like through their Trust Department. Over the years, La Salle Bank's specialty has been secret nominee accounts for the forwarding of bribery money to offshore accounts for crooked state and federal tax collectors, judges, and other public office bandits.

La Salle National Bank is now the U.S. flagship of the Dutch bank octopus, Algemene Bank Nederland, ABN. AND, ABN has bought up banks not only all over the Chicago-area but in some 14 other cities in the U.S. Using what? Using gold they obtained upon the downfall of the Soviet Government. The former Soviet commissars arranged to steal thousands of tons of gold from their Public Treasury. Remember: the Soviets had been the world's second largest producer of gold. The corrupt commissars reportedly made a deal with the Dutch to split the stolen gold with them. Much of the gold is reportedly parked right on or near a Swiss airport for quick, clandestine shipments worldwide. Holland being heavily linked in business with the Vatican, the Pope has given his blessings to these venal arrangements. [Remember, in previous stories we told how the Catholic Archbishop of Chicago is also the Treasurer for the Church for the WHOLE western hemisphere.]

In 1997, IRS officials threatened to arrest me and an associate of mine, when they found out we were going to put on our public access Cable TV Program in Chicago, an important confession. Spilling his gut was a 25-year career "bagman", James R. Vassilos, who had repeatedly succeeded, with impunity, to bribe top state and federal public officials including high officials of the IRS, Chicago Region office, and the Illinois Department of Revenue, and state and federal judges. [Despite the threats of arrest, the show was aired.]

The "bagman" said he reportedly learned about how to do money laundering, for example, from his brother-in-law. And who was that? Why, a director of Algemene Bank Nederland, Theo Bark. Were the bagman's in-laws also outlaws? When the Queen of Holland on rare occasion came to Chicago, who stood in a small, elite group there to kiss the royal hand? Why, the "bagman" and his spouse.

Did the U.S. Treasury Acting Inspector General, Robert Cesca, know about all this hanky-panky? Law enforcement personnel described Cesca as "the highest ranking mafia representative in the U.S. Government". You say you are among those reading this far from Chicago. Well, Chicago has no armlock on this sort of corruption. Start digging. Start asking questions where YOU are. Let us know. Stay tuned.